

REPORT

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY,

IN COMPLIANCE

With a resolution of the Senate, in relation to the expediency of a change in the system of marine hospitals.

DECEMBER 24, 1839.

Referred to the Committee on Commerce and ordered to be printed.

TREASURY DEPARTMENT,
December 19, 1839.

SIR: This report is submitted in compliance with the following resolution, which passed the Senate, March 2, 1839:

“Resolved, That the Secretary of the Treasury be directed to report to the Senate at the next session of Congress, whether any change in the system of marine hospitals is expedient, and if so, what; and especially, if any new hospitals are necessary, and in what manner they ought to be erected, if deemed expedient, and how supported.”

In reply to the first branch of inquiry, I have the honor to state, that in my opinion a “change in the system of marine hospitals is expedient” to a certain extent and in some particulars. The reasons for this opinion are briefly these:

The fund for relief to sick and disabled seamen is not now adequate to meet all the ordinary demands on it by those who have contributed towards it. Besides this, a large class of seamen, not being obliged to contribute to it, are consequently debarred from its benefits, and subjected occasionally to severe privations and sufferings from the want of a change in the system. For full details on these points, reference can be had to the documents hereafter annexed, (A and B.)

The next branch of the resolution requires me to report “what” change is expedient.

In relation to that subject I would observe, that the change most useful and appropriate would seem to be, the extension of the hospital contribution, or deduction to all seafaring people, and hence, an enlargement of the relief afforded, so as to include all of that description, and to extend assistance in many cases of sickness of a chronic character, which, though appealing strongly to public sympathy, are now obliged to be entirely excluded.

Such a change would not be felt oppressively as a tax, and would enable the authorities of the General Government to save from distress, and the ignominy of being treated as paupers, a gallant and meritorious
Blair & Rives, printers.

class of men, whose great exposures and whose character, often so inconsiderate in moneyed affairs, call loudly for public protection.

On the next inquiry, whether "any new hospitals are necessary," I would reply, that, besides those now erecting at Mobile and New Orleans, I should think that, if new classes of seamen were included within the provisions of the laws as just proposed, another hospital at Detroit or Buffalo, and another at Louisville or Cincinnati, would be useful. Experience and time might show the importance of still others at different ports. In further illustration of this point, I would take the liberty to refer to the full report of a medical board, made November 17, 1837, on the appropriate sites for new hospitals on the western and northwestern waters. It will be found among the documents, House of Representatives, 2d Session, 25th Congress, No. 3, (paper No. 5.)

As to the next inquiry, "in what manner they ought to be erected," it will be seen, that if this refers to the form or materials of the structures, the papers No. 6, and Nos. 1 and 2 annexed to No. 6, in the medical report beforementioned, contain full information on that point from an architect of much experience and science.

But if it refers to the source from which the money to erect the building should be furnished, I fear that the hospital fund would not be adequate to that expenditure, and that the new buildings, like those heretofore erected, would have to be constructed chiefly, if not altogether, by appropriations from the public Treasury; or that the fund must be much enlarged, by requiring heavier contributions, if the entire expense is to be imposed upon that.

The last inquiry in the resolution is, how these hospitals should be "supported."

If the fund should be extended, as now proposed, to all classes of seamen, and receive the contributions of all, it would probably be sufficient to maintain the inmates and officers, as well as keep the buildings in repair.

But if found to prove insufficient for those objects, or if burdened with the erection of new buildings, the contributions to the fund could be increased in amount 20, 50 or 100 per cent., and should be, provided the necessities and comforts of the seamen appear, on trial, to require it. In that way this class of men would enjoy the satisfaction and honor of living, while sick, on a fund, which they themselves have aided to form, rather than on mere alms, as paupers; and no constitutional principle would be violated or endangered by maintaining any class in society out of the public Treasury as mere paupers, and thus assuming duties and exercising powers which seem to belong rather to the States and individuals than to the General Government.

On matters connected with the resolution under consideration, I have had the honor to make those previous communications, that have been laid before Congress and printed. Parts of them contain statistical facts and views deemed pertinent and useful on this occasion.

The original documents are, a report to the Senate, made December 6, 1834, 2d session, 23d Congress, No. 7, and a letter to the chairman of the Committee on Commerce in the House of Representatives, dated January 20 1836, and another to the chairman of the Committee of Ways and Means, dated December 26, 1834, printed 1st session, 24th Congress, No. 111.

Such portions of them, as are deemed to have a more immediate and material bearing on the inquiries now under consideration, are annexed, (A and B.)

Respectfully,

LEVI WOODBURY,

Secretary of the Treasury.

Hon. WM. R. KING,

President of the Senate, pro. tem.

A.

Report from the Secretary of the Treasury, in compliance with a resolution of the Senate of the 26th June last, showing the amount of hospital money received, and the number, location, and cost, of the marine hospitals in the United States.

TREASURY DEPARTMENT, REGISTER'S OFFICE,

December 6, 1834.

SIR: I have the honor, in compliance with your reference to this office, of the resolution of the Senate of the United States of the 26th June last, to transmit a statement exhibiting the amount of the hospital money which has been received and paid at each custom-house, and in each year, since July, 1798; and also to state that the following marine hospitals belong to the United States; and that they cost the sums opposite to each:

At Chelsea, Massachusetts	-	-	-	-	\$27,603 39
At Norfolk, Virginia	-	-	-	-	9,334 66
At Charleston, South Carolina	-	-	-	-	17,663 01

The marine hospital at Charlestown, Mass., which cost \$14,842 34, was purchased in 1824 by the Navy Department. The proceeds, \$12,875, are credited in the general account herewith transmitted.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

T. L. SMITH, *Register.*

Hon. LEVI WOODBURY,

Secretary of the Treasury.

TREASURY DEPARTMENT,

December 6, 1834.

In obedience to a resolution of the Senate, passed June 26, 1834, a statement is annexed, showing the amount of "hospital money which has been received at each of the custom-houses of the United States, in each year, since the passage of the act of July, 1798, and the amount of those receipts which has been expended in each district for the relief of sick and disabled seamen, since the date of said act. Also, the number of marine hospitals which have been built in the United States, with the cost of each of them, and where they are located."

In my annual report, the subject to which this resolution relates was supposed to require a few remarks in connexion with its important bear-

ing on our commercial marine. But as fitly associated with this statement, they were then postponed for the purpose of being, in conjunction with it, as they now are, presented. The laws as to marine hospital money are earnestly recommended for revision. It was decided, as long ago as 1798, that the seamen engaged in the fisheries were not liable to its payment; and in 1831, the exemption was, by construction, extended to the seamen in registered vessels while employed in the coasting trade. Hence it has happened, that though our whole number of seamen of every kind, exclusive of about five thousand in the navy, is computed to be seventy-five thousand, yet we collect only about sixty-three thousand dollars of hospital money annually. Whereas, if the whole paid it during the whole year, it would amount to one hundred and eighty thousand dollars. After suitable deductions, if the hospital money amounted to two-thirds of that sum, it would constitute a much more adequate fund for effectual relief to the least provident class of men in society, when they are overtaken by disease, disabled by injuries, or broken down by advanced age. Whether the tax or deduction should embrace all kinds of seamen or not may be problematical; but it certainly ought to include all those in registered vessels, however employed, and be so modified as to furnish amply to this useful class of men, when in distress, all those benevolent and just aids which their contributions and services, when in health and prosperity, could easily and cheerfully provide.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

LEVI WOODBURY,
Secretary of the Treasury.

HON. MARTIN VAN BUREN,
*Vice President of the United States,
and President of the Senate.*

B.

Letter from the Secretary of the Treasury, to the Honorable Joel B. Sutherland, Chairman of the Committee on Commerce, upon the subject of Marine hospitals.

TREASURY DEPARTMENT,
January 20, 1836.

SIR: In reply to your inquiries of the 18th instant, I have the honor to submit the following statements:

The number of marine hospitals in the United States for seamen in the merchant service, and which belong to the General Government, is only three. They are situated, one in Chelsea, Massachusetts, one in Norfolk, Virginia, and one in Charleston, South Carolina. The cost of each is stated in a report from this department to the Senate, read and printed, December 8, 1834. In the other parts of the United States where seamen fall sick who are entitled to relief under the hospital fund, and where the proceeds of it have not been exhausted, they receive aid either at private boarding houses, or in the almshouses near, or in city hospitals at a reasonable price per week for board, nursing, and medical attendance, and under contracts made by the collectors of the respective ports. In

the above United States marine hospitals, except at Charleston, which is managed under a special contract with that city, there is a permanent physician, and other necessary assistants, employed by the collectors and this department. It is believed, that the expense of relief to each seaman per week, is at present about the same out as within the public hospitals, and that by vigilance and experience, the fund has of late years been so administered as to assist many more for the same amount than it was enabled to do formerly. Only such seamen receive relief as have contributed towards the fund; and as none are by law obliged to contribute except those employed in registered vessels coming from abroad, and coasting vessels, it happens that only a portion, and in many parts a small portion, of those diseased, can by law be assisted. We are not only compelled to exclude all from the benefit of the fund, who have not been taxed, but sometimes to restrict the assistance in respect to many who have been taxed. For further explanation upon this point, you are referred to a letter addressed by me, December 26, 1834, to the chairman of the Committee of Ways and Means, a copy of which is annexed, (No. 1.) The whole fund is only about \$63,000 annually, though the whole number of our seamen in the merchant service is supposed to exceed 75,000, and if all contributed, the funds would, at twenty cents per month, while they are employed, be probably more than doubled. I had the honor at the last session to make some remarks on this point in the above report to the Senate, and to which you are now referred for further particulars. The sums paid and expended in each State, and each port in the United States, from 1802 to 1833 inclusive, are exhibited in a document annexed to that report.

It would, in my opinion, be unnecessary, either on the seaboard or the western waters, to erect hospitals at any point or port, at which, or near which, the number of seamen who contributed to the fund, and are entitled to relief, is so small as not to require such buildings for their accommodation. But if the contributors to the fund were multiplied, so as to include all seamen engaged in the fisheries, and in the coasting trade, or in steamboats, it is probable that the number entitled to relief at some places in the west, as well as elsewhere, would probably be so great as to require public buildings for their suitable accommodation. The whole number of seamen who now actually receive relief, some for only a few days, and others for months, is ascertained and estimated to be only about 4,600 a year; and at many of the ports of the ordinary size, as will be seen in the document abovenamed, the average expenditure to all entitled, and so far as the fund will admit, is only from two to five hundred dollars per year. As this relief is not intended, and never has been, to embrace any who have not contributed to the fund, it must be obvious that the erection of hospitals for others, would be the introduction of a system entirely new under the General Government, and that such patients within them must be maintained by annual appropriations from the public Treasury, or a tax of some new character. On the expediency of establishing such a system, I do not propose to offer any comments, as your inquiries seem rather directed to improvements in the present system, retaining, as it is presumed, its original principles, of furnishing relief only to those who have been taxed or have paid towards creating the hospital fund.

With the above explanations, I would then respectfully suggest, in reply to your inquiries, as to "the best mode of establishing and sustain-

ing marine hospitals" on the western waters, and any information on the whole subject, or any improvements which seem proper, that the present laws for collecting hospital money be extended so as to embrace all seamen in all vessels, whether registered, enrolled, or licensed, and in all steamboats of every description, and that all such seamen be entitled to relief under the fund.

Should it be deemed proper to extend the collection still further, to all persons engaged in rowing or navigating any boats, rafts, or vessels, of any description, that touch or pass any port of entry or delivery, somewhat like the law once in force, on the Mississippi, at Fort Adams, before the purchase of Louisiana, then it would seem to be proper to extend the relief *pari passu* to those classes of persons, but not otherwise.

It might, however, be judicious to provide, similar to the 5th section of the act of May 30, 1802, concerning foreign seamen, that in all the marine hospitals of the United States, now, or hereafter established, all such persons when sick, and indeed all strangers, should be received and attended in them, when the accommodations may permit, on the payment weekly of a bare sufficiency to defray the necessary expenses of board and nursing.

In the event of such a change in the law as is above suggested to be proper, new hospitals might be useful at several other points on the Atlantic coast and the gulf of Mexico, especially at New Orleans, and at some on the northern lakes and western rivers. But as the whole fund is now required for relief to the sick already entitled to aid, it will be necessary to make appropriations from the Treasury for the erection of such buildings as Congress may deem necessary and proper, if they are soon to be commenced.

Respectfully, yours,

LEVI WOODBURY.

Hon. J. B. SUTHERLAND, *C'n Com. on Commerce, H. R.*

Extract of a letter to the Hon. James K. Polk, Chairman of the Committee of Ways and Means, House of Representatives of the United States.

TREASURY DEPARTMENT,
December 26, 1834.

2. In regard to the item of \$25,000 required to make good a deficiency in the fund established by the acts of 16th July, 1798, and 3d May, 1802.

The ascertained excess of expenditure incurred for relief of sick and disabled seamen, over and above the ordinary receipts arising under the acts referred to, and the aids derived from former appropriations, amounted on the 1st of January last to the sum of - - - \$2,989 57

The ascertained expenditures from that period until the 30th

September last were - - - - - 56,738 82

The estimated disbursements for the quarter ending 31st

December, instant, this sum - - - - - 20,000 00

79,728 39

From which deduct the estimated receipts for 1834, this sum 50,000 00

Leaving a balance against the fund, at the close of the year

1834, amounting to - - - - - 24,728 39

The resources of the fund have never been adequate to meet the demands upon it. Hence, notwithstanding the various restrictions which at different periods have been imposed to keep the disbursements within the capacity of the fund, repeated deficiencies have arisen, and must continue to arise, while the fund is dependant on the means provided by present enactments, and administered according to existing arrangements. The support of the public hospitals at Chelsea, Norfolk, and at Charleston, is charged upon the fund. By the rules prescribed for its application, patients afflicted with mania, lunacy, chronic, and other incurable diseases, are excluded from its benefits. The term of relief is limited to four months. In places where there are no public or local hospitals, and where more advantageous terms cannot be had, medical charges are restricted to twenty cents per diem. Boarding, lodging, nursing, and washing, to two dollars and fifty cents per week, with an addition of twenty per cent. in districts south of the Potomac. Funeral expenses are limited to six dollars.

It is believed that a further contraction in the provision made for seamen, or in the scale of expenditure, could not be made consistently with a due regard to the claims of humanity, and the helpless and improvident condition of those for whom the benefit of the laws was designed. And, hence, rather than abridge the scanty relief authorized by existing regulations, I have preferred to follow the example of my predecessors, and trust, as heretofore, to the bounty of Congress, or to its further legislation in devising some auxiliary resource in aid of the fund. In connexion with this subject, I would respectfully refer the Committee of Ways and Means to a report from this department to the Senate, dated the 6th inst.

3. *Repair of the marine hospital wharf at Chelsea.* The design of the appropriation asked for this object, will more fully appear from my letter to the Committee of Ways and Means, dated the 5th inst., and the papers therewith submitted, 4, 5, 6.

All which is respectfully submitted.

LEVI WOODBURY,
Secretary of the Treasury.

WASHINGTON, *January, 1836*

SIR: I have been directed by the Committee on Commerce to request the views of the Secretary of the Treasury in relation to the best mode of establishing and sustaining marine hospitals for the reception of the sick, who, from time to time, are landed for medical treatment upon the shores of the western waters. The committee desire at the same time, a report as to the number of marine hospitals, their location, how many sick received during the last year, and the present condition of those establishments, and generally any information that may be deemed important by the Treasury Department, connected with this inquiry.

Respectfully, I remain yours,
J. B. SUTHERLAND.

HON. LEVI WOODBURY,
Secretary of the Treasury.

The members of the fund have never been adequate to meet the de-
 mands upon it. Hence, notwithstanding the various restrictions which
 management have been imposed to keep the disbursements within
 the capacity of the fund, the fund has been inadequate to meet the
 needs of the fund, while the fund is dependent on the means provided by
 present contributions, and administered according to existing arrangements.
 The support of the publication is at present, however, and at present
 is almost upon the fund. By the rules prescribed for its application
 patients affected with acute, chronic, and other incurable diseases
 are not admitted to the fund. The fund is limited to two months
 in patients here there are no public or local hospitals, and where there
 are no hospitals there cannot be had medical treatment restricted to twenty
 patients. However, lodging, nursing, and washing to two dollars
 and fifty cents per week, with an addition of twenty per cent in districts
 south of the Potomac. General expenses are limited to six dollars.
 It is estimated that a further contribution in the provision made for women
 or in the scale of expenditure, would not be made consistently with a due
 regard to the claims of humanity, and the helplessness and unwarranted con-
 dition of those for whom the benefit of the fund was desired. And
 hence, rather than admit the women, most authorized by existing regula-
 tions, I have preferred to follow the example of the predecessor, and trust
 as hereafter to the policy of Congress, or to the further extension in
 determining whether auxiliary resources in aid of the fund. In connection with
 this subject, I would respectfully refer the Committee of Ways and Means
 to the report from this department to the Senate, dated the 1st of
 1870, of the various hospital work in the West. The length of the
 appropriation asked for this object will more fully appear from my letter
 to the Committee of Ways and Means, dated the 1st of June, and the papers
 therewith submitted.

All which is respectfully submitted.
 LEVI WOODBURY,
 Secretary of the Treasury.

WASHINGTON, January, 1870.
 Sir: I have been directed by the Committee on Commerce to request
 the views of the Secretary of the Treasury in relation to the best method
 establishing and sustaining marine hospitals for the reception of the sick,
 who, from time to time are landed for medical treatment upon the shores
 of the western waters. The Committee desire at the same time a report
 as to the number of marine hospitals, their location, how many seek re-
 lief during the last year, and the present condition of those establish-
 ments, and generally any information that may be deemed important by
 the Treasury Department connected with this inquiry.

Respectfully, I remain your obedient servant,
 J. E. SUTHERLAND.